

Mechanical Memories Magazine

ISSUE 45

MAY 2010



*The only UK magazine for collectors and enthusiasts
of Vintage Penny Slot Machines*

Mechanical Memories Magazine

Mechanical Memories Magazine is a subscriber magazine published monthly, except August. When subscribing, please forward your **Name, Address and Telephone number** to the address below and make cheques payable to: Mechanical Memories Magazine

You may also pay online at: www.pennymachines.co.uk/MMM.htm

Annual Subscription (11 issues)

UK £26 inc. UK postage (£26 by Paypal)

Europe £33 inc. airmail

Rest of the world £40 inc. airmail

(International subscriptions are only available by Paypal)

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www.pennymachines.co.uk/MMM.htm

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Editorial

Well, here we are with the May magazine, which you should actually receive in May, with a few days to spare. As always, it's been a struggle getting this one out, particularly as Sharron's been hogging the computer over the last few weeks. The good news is that she has almost completed her studies, and within a few months should be a fully qualified nurse – which should be useful when I finally have a mental breakdown!

Now, as you will appreciate, I am heading for my really busy time of year where much of my time will be taken up at Brighton. Many thanks for all the help I've had with articles over the last few months, but I'm now running out! I have a couple of articles ready for the June issue, but I'm afraid as things stand, the July issue will be very bare. So please try to write something.

And on the subject of magazine content, are you all getting tired of reading the same old adverts every month? Because I know I am. I find it rather disappointing that several subscribers in the past couple of months have been happy to support ebay, and pay their extortionate fees, when they could have advertised in this magazine free of charge. So if you have machines for sale, please do remember that this is **YOUR** magazine, and if you do not support it, you may well lose it.

Till next time,

All the best

Jerry

Front Cover picture, a very early penny slot machine. Anyone know what it is?

News and Coming Events

Jerry on the Telly!

Yes, a certain magazine publisher and vintage penny arcade operator (who you all know well) is about to become a TV star – next stop Hollywood! Well, that's more than a little over-stated, but my Mechanical Memories arcade in Brighton is to be featured in a short article for the BBC's One Show, I think sometime in June. Primetime national television will not only help promote the arcade, but should also be good for vintage coin-op in general. We all know how difficult it is to create awareness in our hobby, and television must surely be the best medium. I've no idea when it will be screened, they haven't even done the filming yet, but I shall post details on my Mechanical Memories website, so keep an eye on the Announcements forum. www.mechanicalmemoriesmuseum.co.uk.

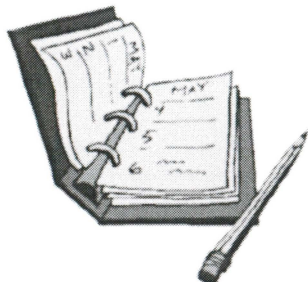
Carters at Dreamland

Carters Steam Fair will be making an appearance at Margate's Dreamland over the Spring Bank holiday weekend. This will be a great promotion for the Dreamland cause, and will also give the people of east Kent an opportunity to visit Carters, perhaps for the first time. It will also be the first time a fair has been presented at Dreamland for several years – and what better fair than Carters!

Just to ensure Margate is really buzzing over the weekend, and to coincide with Carters visit to Dreamland, there's the **Margate Meltdown** – a road motorbike-run from London's famous Ace Café to Margate on the Bank holiday Monday (31st May), departing at 10.30 am. If you live anywhere close to the London North Circular road, A13 in Essex or the A2/M2 in Kent, look out for the bikes. Better still, get to Margate! There will be live music and other entertainment on the seafront throughout the day, so this really should be a great day out. If you don't like motorbikes or loud music or vintage fairgrounds (including a massive vintage penny arcade), then you probably shouldn't be reading this magazine!

Chrome Plating

Good news! I've found a plating company based in Northwest Kent, who can offer good quality chrome plating at a reasonable cost. More details next month.



Dates for your diary

Carters Steam Fair 29th – 31st May
Dreamland, Margate

Great Dorset Steam Fair 1st – 5th September
Tarrant Hinton, Dorset

Jukebox Madness Show 25th & 26th September
Kempton Park racecourse

MMM Vintage Slot Collectors' Show & Auction 28th November
Coventry (Provisional)

Bonhams Mechanical Music & Scientific Instruments Sale 7th December
Knowle

Don't forget – if you know of any event which would be of interest to readers of the magazine, please let me know so that I can include details in these pages.

Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update May 2010

Plans to put up to £4 million into creating the world's first amusement park of thrilling historic rides at Dreamland in Margate have been agreed by Thanet District Council. The proposals were discussed at an Extraordinary Meeting last night (Thursday 13 May) with members agreeing to put £2.2 million of the council's money into the project. Members also gave approval for the council to borrow up to £1.8 million, if alternative funding cannot be found.

The £12.5 million project, which is jointly being taken forward by the council, the Dreamland Trust and land owners the Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company, will create a major new visitor attraction at Dreamland. It would bring several hundred new jobs to the town, along with half a million visitors. They would be able to enjoy historic amusement park rides, many of which are the last surviving examples of their type. These would be built around the listed Scenic Railway, the UK's oldest surviving wooden roller coaster, and the fourth oldest in the world, which would be the centerpiece of the park. The scheme would also see restoration work carried out on the grade II* listed Dreamland cinema building.

Funding for the project is coming from the Sea Change Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund, with applications submitted for additional money to English Heritage, Arts Council England, SEEDA and Thanet Works. Work should commence towards the end of 2010, with the park expected to open in summer 2012.

The famous Carters Steam Fair will open at Dreamland Margate for three days this Spring Bank Holiday. Organised in association with the Dreamland Trust, this appearance is designed as a taster to the heritage amusement park will be opening in 2012. Established in 1976 by the late John Carter, Carter's Royal Berkshire Steam Fair is the UK's premier vintage travelling fair operator, boasting many rides from the early 20th Century. The fair's many beautifully restored rides include Gallopers, Ark, Helter Skelter, Dodgems, Octopus, Victory Dive Bomber and Swingboats to name but a few. Many of these rides are similar to those that would have appeared at Dreamland through the years. The line-up will also feature a Wall of Death ride similar to that which appeared at Dreamland for many years and, of course, Carter's vintage slot machine arcade.

The fair, which travels around London, Shire Counties and the South East, demonstrates the popularity of vintage rides and is a great day out for families and children of all ages. Entry is free with rides on a pay as you go basis. Carters, with James Messham's Wall of Death, will be at Dreamland from 29 to 31 May.

Finally for this month, I want to leave you with an extract of a review in the local Isle of Thet Gazette newspaper on the special Quadrophenia event that was held at the Carlton Westgate cinema last month:

"Mods flooded the Carlton Cinema in Westgate for a screening of Quadrophenia as Thanet returned to its 1960s heyday. Dozens of scooters surrounded the cinema where Paolo Hewitt, biographer of Paul Weller and the Small Faces, and Roger K Burton, costume stylist of Quadrophenia, presented the film on Easter Saturday.

They were questioned by the audience and spoke after the film's screening about the impact it had on youngsters at the time. The Ronnie Lane mobile studio, the tiny caravan where The Who recorded the soundtrack to the film, was parked outside the cinema. There was also a Dreamland exhibition in the entrance of the cinema, which showed paper cuttings from the time of the rivalry between mods and rockers, and many photos of the fun park's past. The event was not exclusive to those who were the original mods in the 1960s; many young people also attended the event."

OK, Quadrophenia was partly located in Brighton, not Margate, but this event was a real boost for the other significant element of the Dreamland Margate offer of the future, a celebration of youth culture.

Nick Laister

Chairman, The Dreamland Trust

www.dreamlandmargate.com
www.savedreamland.co.uk

NEW RELEASE

Showfolk: An Oral History of a Fairground Dynasty by Frank Bruce

The story of Frank Codona and his family - a fairground dynasty that has lasted for over two hundred years in Scotland, told mostly in their own words. A newspaper article in 1954 was headed 'Codona; the royal family of the fairground' but because of inter-marriage their story parallels and is intertwined with that of other circus and fairground families.

Travelling showfolk have been entertaining Scots for centuries and a visit to 'the shows' was a highlight of the year until recent memory. The Codonas are one of the longest and most established show families, having arrived from the continent in the late eighteenth century. Using original research Showfolk draws on interviews from three generations to give a vivid and richly anecdotal account of this ever-changing world enhanced by many previously unseen illustrations.

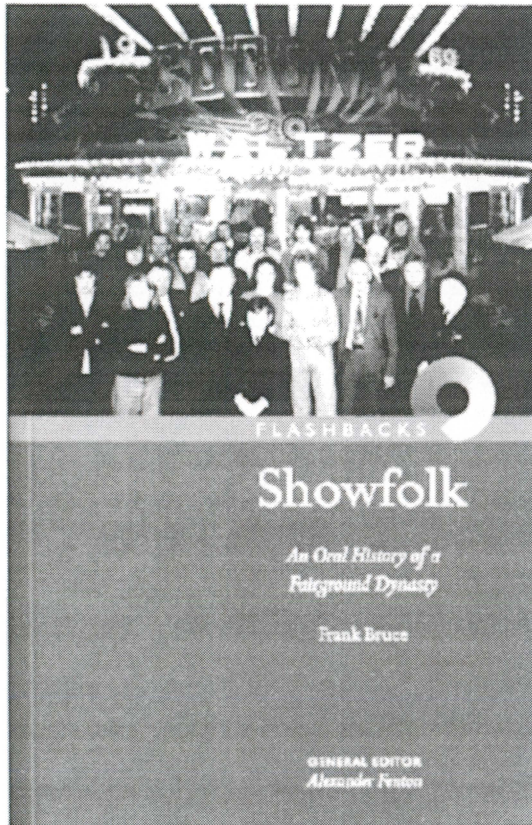
The interviews have been kept intact as much as possible, to keep the flow of overlapping individual life stories but are organised chronologically from the 1890s, when it enters living memory, up to the present. The hundred years from 1790 are described in a lively introduction including many first-hand accounts and following the family fortunes in the United Kingdom, the United States where members reached the top of the circus profession and as far afield as Hawaii.

RRP: £10.99

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My Latest Restoration

By Richard Brewerton

Happily I drove home from Coventry last November with my latest acquisition in the back of the car. Rotolite is an electro-mechanical wall machine (I don't know the maker) with flashing lights and bells, which I thought would make a change from allwins and bandits. I'd given it a good once over before the bidding started; the case was in good condition, no splits or worm holes, just superficial marks which wouldn't be too difficult to sort out. There was no plating to be done this time, and no peeling backflash to replace. Being an ex telephone engineer in a previous life, the relays and uniselectors were all familiar. Being described as 'needing some adjustment,' this one should be easy peasy. Why do I always say that? I should know by now that every job I undertake, be it a machine, or at home, or on the car, will always take twice as long as I estimate.

Anyway, we got home safely and I carried the machine in and placed it on the kitchen table. Now a proper survey could begin: two columns of coloured lights, sixteen in all, wired to a uniselector; another uniselector, whose purpose was a mystery at the moment; five old post office relays; a bell; a large transformer and rectifier; a big chunky mains driven payout solenoid and an old fashioned lighting switch. I easily traced the mains wiring from the solenoid to one of the relay contacts, but with no guards or warning labels, there was mains voltage sitting there waiting to bite unsuspecting poking fingers. Mental note made to remember to unplug socket before poking.

But now it was playtime, so I got a handful of pennies to test it. As I dropped one into the coin slot, I watched as it rolled down the chute and operated the micro switch on the way down. This was good. A relay operated, obviously having detected the coin insertion. This was even better. I pushed the operate button, one of the uniselectors coughed and took a couple of steps, two lights on the front flashed.....then nothing. This was not good. I guessed it was time to adjust that bit that was 'in need of some adjustment.' Usually with these things, the most likely problem is a dirty relay contact, so remembering to remove the mains plug, I dived in. It wasn't easy to see things with the components mounted in the box, but with a mirror I managed to clean everything in sight. Some of the relay springs had lost their tension and were just flapping around, but a bit of careful tweaking sorted that out. Try again, this time nothing, not even a cough or flicker. Dead as a wotsit. I went in headfirst with a multimeter and soon found out that there was no power getting to the relays. It seemed that the transformer had given up on me, and all I'd done was look at it. But now it was dead. I connected my car battery charger on to two appropriate points and some life was restored, but it still didn't do what it said on the can.

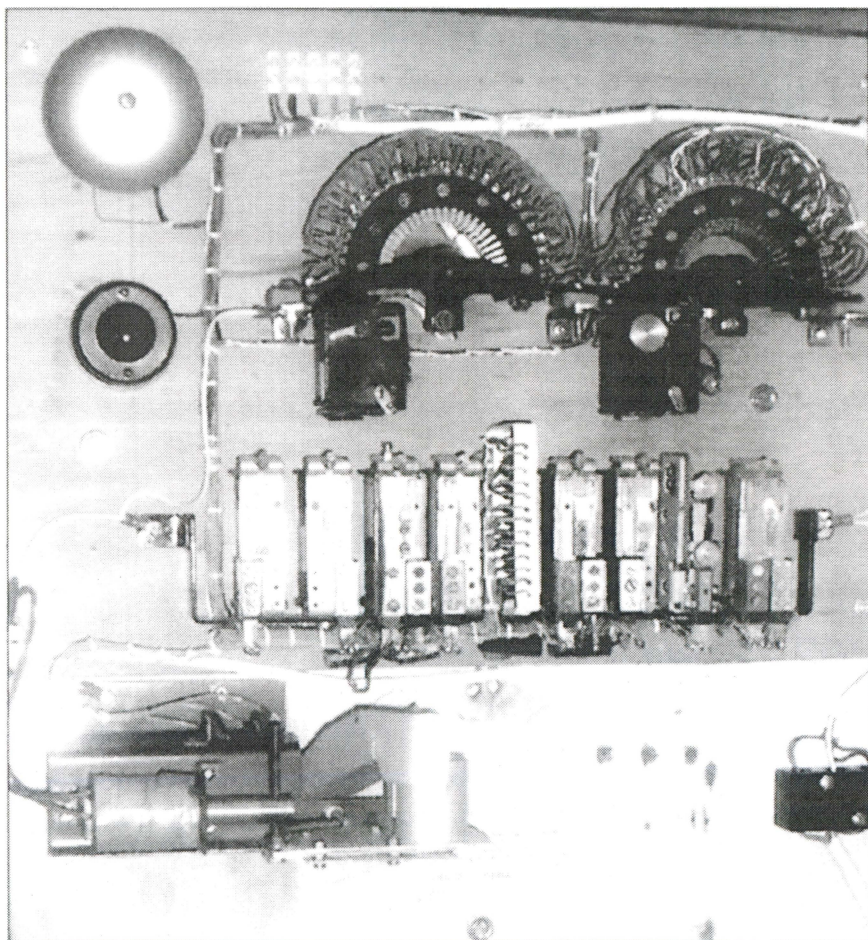
On inserting a coin and depressing the button, one of the uniselectors should drive round flashing the lights. When the button is released it should stop, and if a matching



*Richard's new Rotolite, which he acquired at the Coventry auction last year.
I recall there were two on offer, I wonder who has the other?*

pair are left illuminated, then according to colour the solenoid should step 1, 2 or 3 times, and payout 2, 4 or 6 pennies. But without a wiring diagram you're somewhat stuffed. So where do we go? After a pondering session, I cut out all the old cable ties and stitching, and laboriously traced each wire and noted which contacts went to which. The two uniselectors I cleverly named A and B, whilst the relays were A to E. Without too much trouble I found that one arc of uniselector B fed one column of lights and a second arc fed the other column. On a third arc, contacts associated with a mismatch of colours were strapped together, as were the matching red, yellow and green contacts associated with a payout of 2d. Two contacts of the 25 matched with blue and a payout of 4d and two matched with white to pay 6d. So armed with a list of wiring runs, I set about drawing it as a pictorial diagram. Some of it made sense but the part that uniselector A played in the proceedings was, and remains a complete mystery.

After another pondering session, I resolved that if I couldn't fathom out this circuit then I'd have to design my own. I knew what was needed from the machine and the components that I had to play with. After a week of solid thinking and scribbling and rubbing out I had a circuit that, in theory anyway, would fulfil all the functions needed. The problem was that I couldn't do it with the five relays that I had; I needed eight. Luckily, a search on ebay found me someone selling a box of old relays, exactly what I needed. The bidding was at 99p with two days to go, but these relays had to be mine, so I bid £20 and waited, fingers crossed. When I checked after the sale, I found that ebay had bid on my behalf up to £12 and I had won. Interestingly, someone had put in a bid of £10 with ten seconds to go. My need was greater than his however.



Richard's very neat new wiring job.

When my parcel arrived I could start stripping down the old wiring from the relays and cleaning up the contacts. I needed to split the old spring sets in order to make up new make, break and changeover contact sets. A new mounting bracket was made to accommodate the additional relays and I fixed these and the two uniselectors on to a board, which would be fixed inside the case later, so that I could see what I was doing. The contact bank of unisector A had to be rewired to suit my diagram, and when finished, I mounted them both rubber blocks to give a bit of shock absorbing and quietening. The payout solenoid, coinchute and other bits of tin ware were all cleaned up and painted where necessary. I was then able to test it.

Without getting too technical, unisector B drives until it is stopped on a random contact. It identifies this as either a lose, win 2, 4 or 6. Unisector A is stepped over three contacts, testing each as it goes and operating the solenoid 0, 1, 2, or 3 times as necessary. When I came to test it, there was some fine-tuning needed. The relays that formed the stepping circuit stepped too fast and the solenoid couldn't keep up, therefore not reliably paying out on a win 6. Appropriately sized capacitors wired across a relay coil cause them to become slower to operate. Some arcing was present on the wiper tips, but capacitors soon quenched those sparks. A plastic guard over the dangerous relay contacts and earth bonding where necessary, and that was almost it. I'm still pondering what to do with the old transformer and rectifier, whether or not to get it rewired for authenticity. In the meantime, I bought a dc power pack from Maplins, which delivers 13.8 volts and is much safer.

Finally, when I removed the artwork from the front door, behind the award card I found an alternative card awarding only 2d for any matching colour. This was obviously the reason for the old light switch. My first thought was to try to incorporate this feature in my circuit, but decided to leave it for now. However, after playing the machine it soon became evident that it was too generous at paying out to the point where the small coin tube was emptied. I calculated that of the 25 unisector contacts, 11 were winning positions, giving a payout ratio of 44%. So I selected 5 contacts and wired them through the old switch such that with the switch operated unisector B will step over these contacts reducing the payout ratio to 24%, which makes it much more satisfying to play.

Was this restoration enjoyable? Yes, with out a doubt. It awakened skills and memories long forgotten from nearly thirty years ago. Would I do another one? Dunno, maybe. The trouble is if any of the components fail, then it is a big problem getting replacements, but as I said at the beginning, it made a pleasant change from the usual allwin or bandit.

Richard Brewerton

Kiddie Rides (continued)

By Jerry Chattenton

Following Robert Rowland's article last month on kiddie rides (remember those great pictures)? Andy Doran contacted me with news of some rides he owns, one of which is the highly collectable and much sought-after Edwin Hall Dalek. In addition to some information on his machines, Andy also sent me a link to a short Britishpathe film featuring the Edwin Hall factory in Streatham, in which can be seen the helicopter and spaceship pictured in Robert's article last month. Take a look – it's brilliant!

<http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=1375>



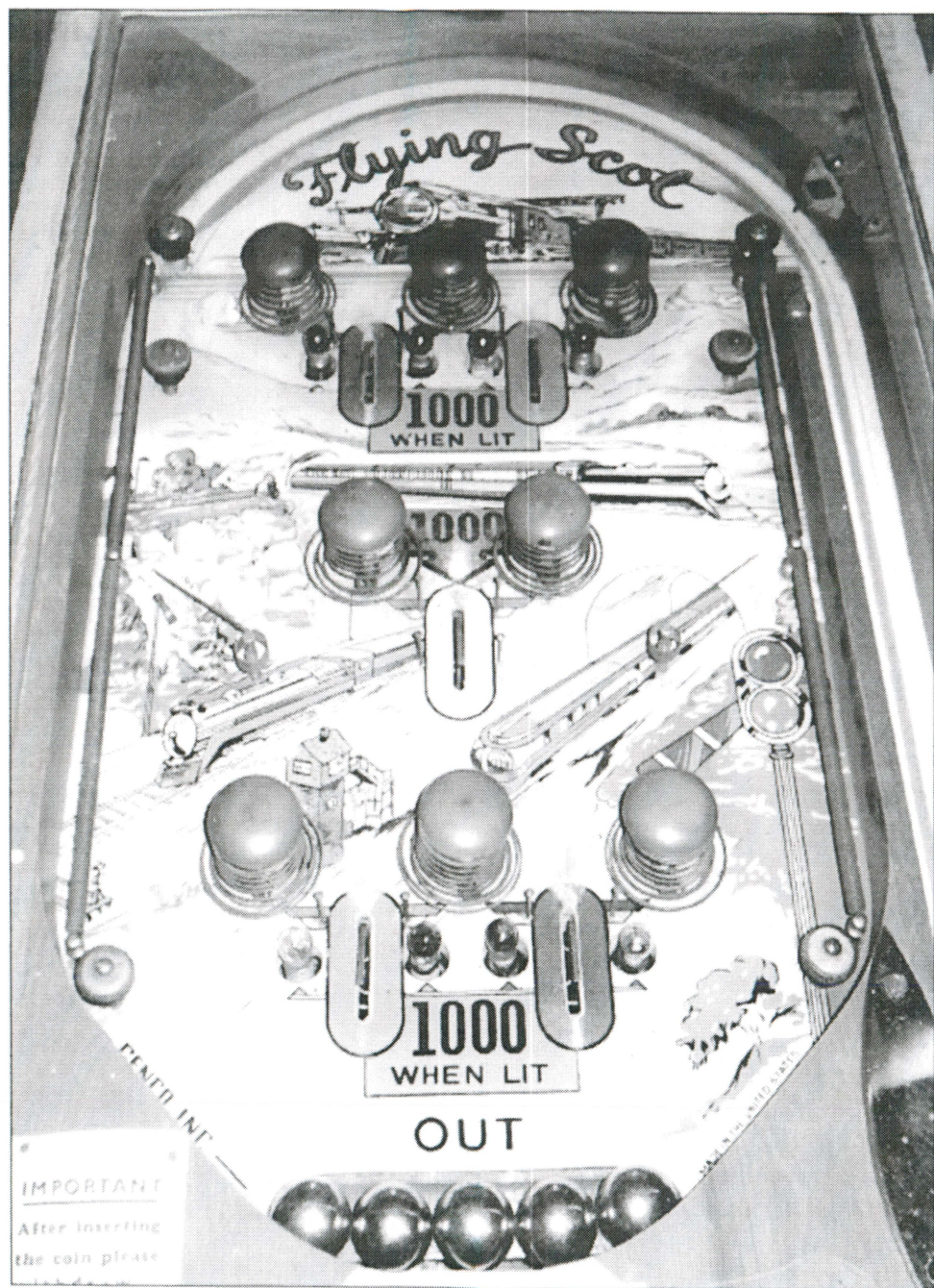
Andy pictured in his Moonbug ride and Edwin Hall Dalek.

Of particular interest are the Austin J40 pedal car rides that Andy has, which were originally on Southend seafront. They are labelled Robinson Brothers (London) Ltd on the base, presumed to be the makers. Unfortunately, Andy has not been able to find any information on Robinson Brothers, so if anyone has any info. please let me know.

At the time of writing, I still haven't had a chance to post Robert's pictures on the pennymachines site (due to the afore mentioned Sharron hogging the afore mentioned computer). However, by the time you read this, I hope to have done so, and I shall also post Andy's pictures.



Andy's Austin J40 pedal car kiddie rides, originally on Southend seafront.



IMPORTANT
After inserting
the coin please

My 1939 Genco Flying Scot

By Robert Rowland

About three years ago, a good friend of mine who owns one of the local arcades, was clearing out an old shed at the arcade premises (I just happened to be about at that time). He suddenly shouted to me, "Come and look at what we have just found." As I approached this old type wooden out-shed, which to be honest looked as though it could fall down any second, two members of his staff lifted a glass-topped slot out. It was filthy, sort of black dried muck all over the glass, but I could still make out the name of it on the playfield: **Flying Scot**. "Are you interested in this?" he said, "it's yours for £150." Without any thought, I said "Deal."

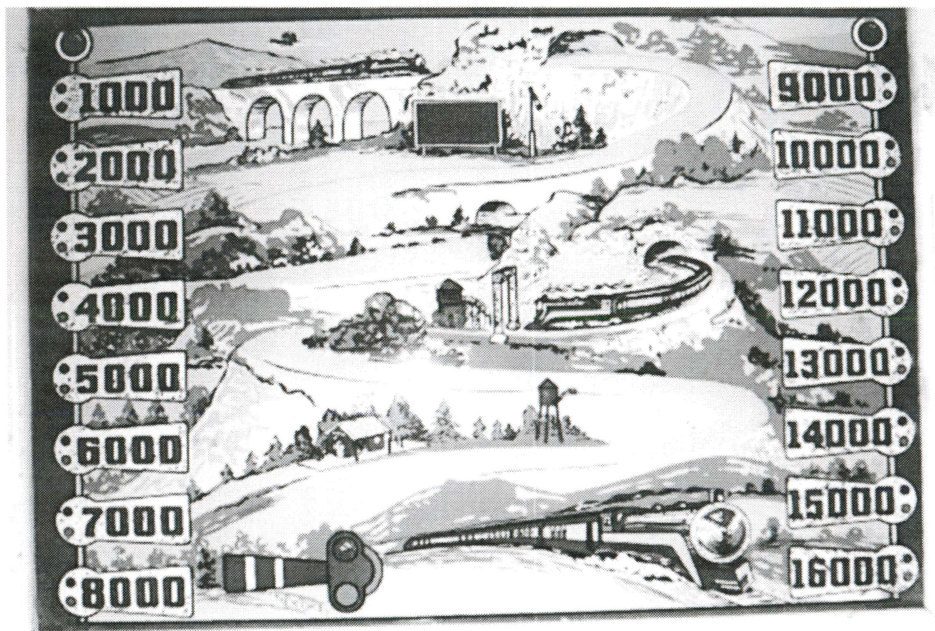
Looking back now, what if there had been no insides? I had never even seen one of these before, and we all know chances like don't turn up every day. Anyway, after a struggle, I got it home, fitted a plug, switched on, andno lights, in fact nothing at all. If I am honest, it's what I expected. Even at that moment, I still felt that I had done the right thing in buying the machine, so my first thought was to enlist the help of an old friend who used to work in a local arcade here in Mablethorpe in the 1960s.

Next day he arrived, "I remember them," he said, "we had a line of six, side by side in the late '50s. He lifted the playfield up to reveal all the workings. He first used his meter to check that power was present at various points. Yes! Power was present, as the meter's needle was moving fully to the left. He started to inspect the two solenoid counters that advance the score in hundreds and thousands. The contacts on both counters appeared to be covered in a green fungus substance. He slowly moved both counters by hand, backwards and forwards many times, and sure enough, certain scores on the backflash started to light up – 300, 5000, 700, 10000 etc.

I was getting quite worried, as my old friend was touching various contacts with his bare hands (something I had no intention of doing). I mentioned this to him and he didn't seem at all worried, "It's only 12 volts," he said. I suppose working on these machines in the '50s and '60s he knew exactly what to touch and what not to touch (worrying at the time though). A few squirts of Servisol electrical cleaner here and there, the green fungus was disappearing off the contacts, and more bulbs were lighting up. Some bulbs were not lit, but we could see that these were black and had clearly blown. A massive problem though was that these bulbs had rusted in. We sprayed a couple with WD40, but this action proved negative, as the glass part of the bulb now slipped in my fingers. I just could not get a firm grip. To try and unscrew a bulb, I lightly gripped the top of one bulb with pliers. As I tried to turn, it broke. Thin specks of glass everywhere – it was so frustrating. We eventually managed to remove and replace all the blown bulbs (drove me mad though), so now all twenty six bulbs on the backflash, including the tilt light, and eight bulbs on the playfield were fully lit and the machine was fully working. The thrill I felt was immense.

How it works: Insert penny in slide, push in and release. This delivers five large ball bearings, which are individually fired onto the playfield by the plunger. Every time the ball hits a bumper, 100 is scored and when the ball drops between two bumpers, 1000 is scored (provided the two lights either side are lit). Reading the award card, it says score 12,000 to win 3d or score 16,000 to win 6d. This would take some doing, I can tell you!

The artwork on this machine is superb; the backglass has to be one of the best of its era. This slot was made in 1939 by Genco (USA), before the invention of flippers and is based on the historic record-breaking speed run of the famous Flying Scotsman steam train.

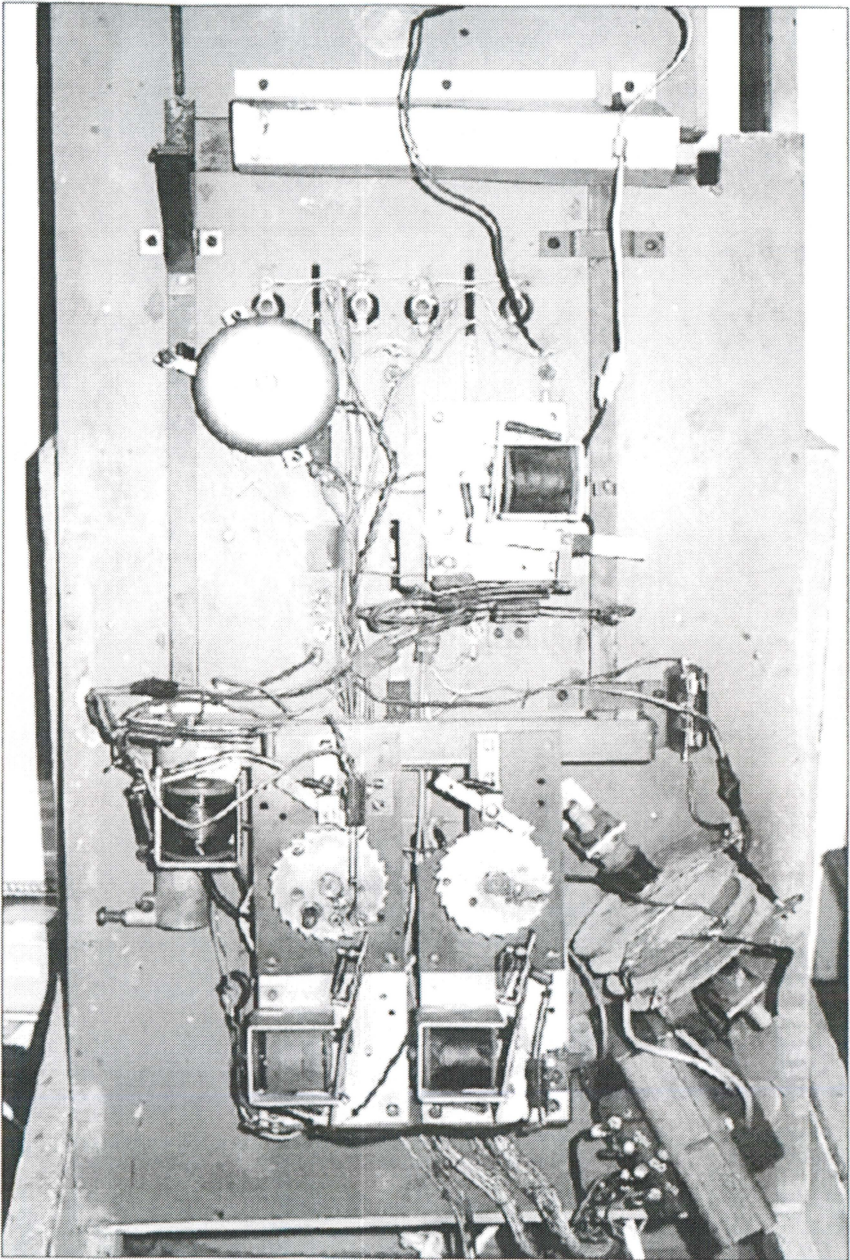


The beautifully detailed backglass.

I believe that any of these bagatelle type machines are well worth owning. To think that my Flying Scot had been hidden away in a leaky old shed for well over thirty-five years, and now a piece of history has been saved. It shows us all that things can still turn up. I am so happy to now own this slot, I would not want to part with it, even if someone offered twice the price I paid. I rescued it and can now enjoy it in my own personal collection.

If you go onto Youtube and type in 'Pinball Flying Scot', you can see a two minute clip, showing this machine in full working order.

Robert Rowland



The relatively simple electro-mechanics of Roberts Flying Scot.

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Volume II (April 07 – March 08)

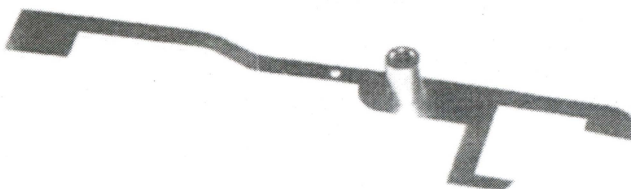
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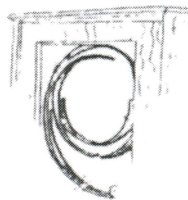
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Middle 18" inside length
Outer 40" inside length

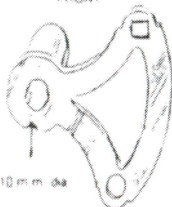


Win Tabs. Red printer on Silver foil sticky backed 12 on a sheet

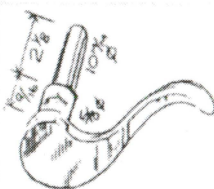


CHROMED 7 ball win gallery. 6 x 1.9/16

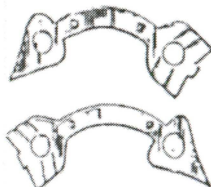
CHROMED TRIGGER FRONT



10 mm dia



TRIGGER



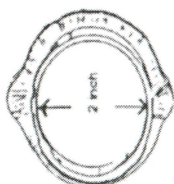
CHROMED ARROWS
Reversible.

CHROMED PAYOUT BOWL

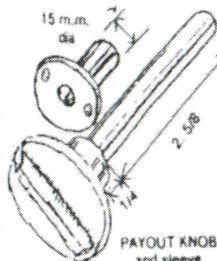


2.5 inch dia cup 2 x 0.25 inch fixing squares at 3.75 inch centres

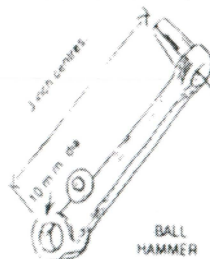
CHROMED KNOB SHIELD



2 x tapped M5 fixing holes on extended nipples 2. 1/2 centres.

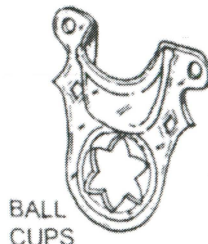
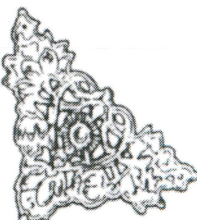


PAYOUT KNOB and sleeve



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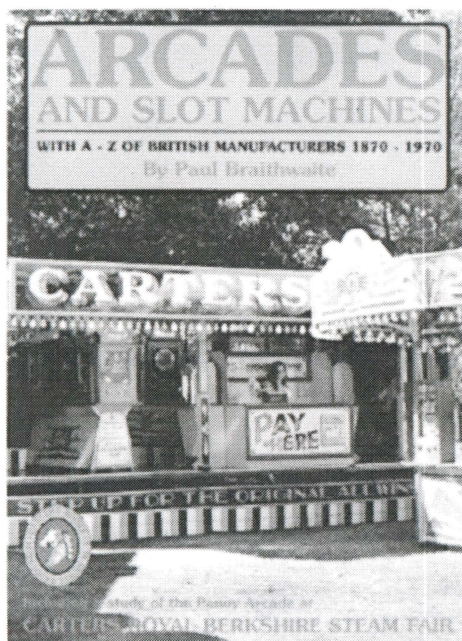
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